

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Deans, Heads of Department, Divisions and Centres

FROM: Division for Research Development

DATE: 30 April 2021

RE: Communication from the Research Ethics Committee: Animal Care and Use (REC: ACU)

Please circulate the following information amongst all relevant staff and students

To all Researchers involved in animal research, teaching and testing

1. New Chair Appointed

Prof DU Bellstedt has been appointed as chair of the REC: ACU for 2021. Since starting his research career in 1980, he has used animals such as mice, chickens, rabbits and ostriches in his immunological research. He is an authority on tropical fishes in his private capacity and has conducted phylogenetic research on fishes. This has led him to develop a deep understanding of the needs and well-being of experimental animals and the responsibility of using them in research. He has lectured on animal ethics to biology students for many years and has served on the Animal Ethics Committee since 2013.

2. Submission of Applications

The committee wishes to indicate that in future it prefers that supervisors submit applications even in cases where students have to conduct animal experimentation. This will likely improve the quality of applications submitted and thereby shorten review times. The committee reserves the right to reject without review, any incomplete or poorly written ethics application.

3. Oral Gavage

At its annual strategic session on 14 February 2020 the REC: ACU decided to no longer, **as a matter of course**, approve any animal ethics applications, that involve the utilisation of the oral gavage technique (liquid compounds administered directly into the stomach of mice and rats via a technique called oral gavage).

After extensive discussions, the committee agreed that this procedure is of high risk to the animal and can cause irreparable harm if done incorrectly. It can therefore only be considered if the following conditions are met; **1.** A SAVC registered Veterinarian, SAVC registered Animal Technician or a Section 23 (c) (Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act 19 of 1982) authorised person (with the required training and experience) is conducting the procedure and **2.** All alternatives to the oral gavage technique have been thoroughly investigated (with justifiable proof of it not being an effective option).

All researchers are therefore encouraged to investigate the use of alternative methods to this procedure prior to submitting an application involving oral gavage. Depending on the nature of the investigation, other methods of administration could include for example **i)** oral treatment administration via incorporation of treatments into jelly blocks, food pellets or drinking water, **ii)** intraperitoneal injection or **iii)** continuous infusion via implanted osmotic pumps. In cases where treatment taste aversion is an issue, treatment microencapsulation should be considered.

It is the conviction of this committee that the use of animals in research, teaching and testing at Stellenbosch University must always be guided by the principles of the 3R's as outlined in the **South African National Standard 10386:2008**. In this case, the principles of *replacement* and *refinement* will ensure humane care and use of animals.

On behalf of the REC: ACU

Prof Dirk U Bellstedt

Chair: REC: ACU

Email: dub@sun.ac.za

Ms Malene Fouche

Director: Research Integrity and
National Grants

Email: mfouche@sun.ac.za

Mr Winston A Beukes

Coordinator: Research Ethics
(Animal Use and Biosafety)

Email: wabeukes@sun.ac.za
